

\mem\ramdass.de (and, \moral\bombing)
September 2, 1997

Notes on the Lama Writings, 1984 (manuscript of a book for Crown, based on dialog between DE and Ram Dass at Lama Institute).

The DOD, acting for each of ten presidents since 1945, has made detailed plans and complete preparations for killing on command --of the president, or in some circumstances lower military commanders--hundreds of millions of launderers, dairymen, shopowners, farmers, office workers, and their husbands and wives, all their children, their elderly relatives, the sick in hospitals, prisoners, worshippers in church, to blind and kill all the birds, pets, herds and wild animals in vast regions and to poison permanently huge areas of the earth. At almost inconceivable expense over fifty years all preparations have been made to kill these people nearly simultaneously in the space of a day or two, with hundreds of millions more to die within months.

On a scale that was then smaller--but still involving the deliberate indiscriminate slaughter of hundreds of thousands to millions of non-combatants--the US sought, acquired and used this capability for years before any other country in the world could make comparable threats against the US.

Subsequently, however, the Soviet Union built a fully comparable capability, and three other countries have invested in forces that could achieve instantaneous massacre of non-combatants on the scale of the Holocaust. Three more could now inflict the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on a number of cities.

War "preparedness" has not always meant what it has come to mean since 1945: deliberate preparations for deliberate massacre, for the annihilation of civilians.

Just War: absolute immunity of noncombatants. Not all violence was acceptable, even in self defense or defense of the innocent, even in wars otherwise justifiable and directed by otherwise legitimate authority.

cult of strategic bombing

[analogy: massive coercion must work; the unarmed civilian must bend, crack, jump off the tracks. (This morning's Chronicle: the Concord Naval Station's security officers made the decision not to arrest the demonstrators but to run the trains through, "giving them the choice to get off or to stay put," i.e., to move or be killed or maimed. (the threat was, legally, an assault). The base's assumption, like that of McNamara (recalled in Hanoi in June) or Rusk, or of Nixon and Kissinger in 1969 and later, that they ought to have a breaking point, that with enough pain...

(Last night watching Hoodlums, the police chief torturing a black gangster for information is sure he'll talk...his black accomplice says, "He isn't going to talk," the chief says, "he will...")

Nixon to Dobrynin: "The train has left the station and is rolling down the track..." "Airplane?" No train...

For lecture at Sonoma State this afternoon on Strategic Bombing, \Technology and Human Extinction:

War plans: cities (first or second use): vs. Just War immunity of non-combatants

--325 million---600-800 M

--up from 1-10 million (when US had monopoly, of A-bombs); first-use.

--H bombs (A-bomb trigger)

--unexamined effects: fire; nuclear winter (1984): ending life (vs. Teller, 1982)

--How had we come to this?

--Hamburg, (Coventry, London) (Rotterdam, Guernica, Warsaw) (Shanghai: Lost Horizon, 1931), Dresden, Berlin; Tokyo, 60 other cities; Hiroshima, Nagasaki, 10 others... (Szilard and petition, Rabinowitz)

--earlier, slaughter of WWI, 13 million. Trenchard, Douhet, Mitchell. RAF, 1942 on (vs. USAF, till 1945). Motives, e.g. of LeMay, March

9 -10 1945.

--Terrorism

--US promotion of proliferation, through priorities, example, first-use threats, testing...Hence inability to "use our whole vote, our whole influence" against use, proliferation, anti-terrorism (anti-genocide...)

--Public values/priorities: not strongly against state terrorism, genocide, torture. Milgram...

--Lesson of Vietnam: need for activism, to challenge the priorities of state officials, who do not give high priority to our best interests, to the long run, to children and the environment,...

(Antinuclear movement: as in Vietnam, desperately needed, but only partially and fitfully effective or even active).

secret shift in norms, constraints be us and uk Leaders.

Doomsday Machine

September 4, 1997

I didn't make the point clearly yesterday: the need to reconstitute the norm against terrorism that was dropped when the State picked up the "weapon of the weak," the weapon natural to Hitler/the "beast"/the Evil One (but also to certain members of the Air Force, allied to producers of long-range aircraft).

I did say that 1942--the year the Manhattan Project got underway--was not the right time in human history to discard the immunity of civilians. It was just 10 years before humanity acquired the ability to end life on earth by targetting civilians in cities (first thermonuclear test). The strategic bombing practices in WWII removed any moral/legal obstacle to the use of the A-bomb against a city, which legitimized/removed moral obstacle to/ made virtually certain a competitive race between the US and SU in thermonuclear city-busting capability (and counterforce capability likewise threatening to civilians).

All that the Air Force and War Department needed as a reason to target cities or use the A-bomb was that it might help defeat the enemy--"military necessity," "reasons of state." If there were competing uses for the same resources, "moral" issues were not a consideration.

To introduce strong moral/legal considerations is to change this calculus, even if there are "necessity" exceptions/loopholes to an absolute ban. It changes the burden of proof, the considerations brought to bear, and possibly the audience or "jury, judge," the ultimate deciders.

Justification is required (in the face of challenge, by conscience or by parties not "normally" part of the decision process. Legal counsel? Ha. "Moral Counsel"? Ha, ha. The post doesn't even exist. Why not, in the DOD, NSC, CIA, State? Why is there no equivalent of this? But: outside critics.)

To justify bombing of Dresden or Hiroshima or Tokyo, it's not enough to show it could have had some helpful effect, or may have had, or did have. That's all the military (and Stimson, HST!) needed! But that fact showed that they had abandoned a moral stricture against violence to non-combatants.

(What was the "greater evil," if any, to be averted by RAF shift in bombing targets in February 1942? Lack of any large

British contribution to offensive operations on the Allied side in 1942 and perhaps later. So? Less postwar "influence" with US? Or wartime influence? How much was that worth to UK? Did the US JCS even think of British bombing as making much of a contribution to the war effort?)

[When we use the defense of necessity in CD, are we not arguing that we are justified on the grounds that our action may help, to a small degree, that it may contribute--with great uncertainty, indirectly, probably with a long delay, to averting a greater evil? We may go beyond that to say that we believe our action and many others like it that may be stimulated by it, are necessary to avert the evil. But we are not saying that our own action will or is likely to avert the evil by itself, or that even many like it will do so with certainty or will affect the probability of the evil "radically," lowering it drastically and perhaps to near-zero.

Thus, our claim of effectiveness of our action is much more moderate than in the usual non-CD application of the necessity defense. At the same time, our non-violent "offense" is usually pretty small, too. But that was not true for the Pentagon Papers (where we did not use a justification defense, but could have if we had conceded that my act would "normally" have violated a law).

Thus, we may not meet the usual legal requirements for this element of the necessity defense, that the act in question "be effective in averting the evil," which usually means that it should be certain or very likely to prevent the greater evil.

Still, the defense is usually rejected on the grounds that the action couldn't have any effect at all. Argument focusses on that point, and my testimony that it could have some effect is usually accepted as relevant. So maybe the test isn't that stringent.]

I just saw a defense of the bombing of Japan on the grounds that it surely contributed to the willingness of the Japanese generals to surrender on terms. But this is not an adequate justification. How necessary was it, and how much difference did it make? And what were alternative terms, how bad were they?

By the same token, it's not necessary to show that the bombing, or the A-bomb, had no effect at all on the ending of the war, or that alternatives were exactly as effective or better, and that all of this was known. (As Szilard and the scientists argued, the bomb should be rejected, for long-term reasons but, it could have been argued, for moral reasons as well, even if it did save a large number of US lives (less than "a million").

Why does Gar Alperowitz press this claim so strongly? Perhaps because he wants not to reject the morality of the action so much as to demonstrate convincingly that other motives were at work,

rather than the claimed one that the only purpose was to end the war quickly. (That claim was advanced after the war precisely to answer moral objections, not so much to conceal the motives that Gar inferred. Actually, the main reason for concealing them, especially after 1947, was because they were thought inadequate for meeting the moral challenge. I.e., Truman and Stimson saw their own moral (and political) calculations as being different from those of the public and religious critics. What was good enough reason for them, even morally, was not, they suspected, good enough for the others: so they asserted false expectations, alternatives and reasons that might meet the others' tests: and which did so).

The point is that within the military/governmental apparatus, there was no moral consideration brought to bear on either the bombing or the A-bombing, no scruple or sanction or tabu or stricture against the massive destruction of non-combatants for reasons of state, i.e., "good" reasons of our state, pursuing the war against an evil and dangerous enemy. There was no internal opposition to either (although in the case of the A-bomb, with Japan essentially defeated, a few individuals did raise doubts or propose at least alternative procedures. No major official, unless Eisenhower to Stimson, actually said, "Don't do it." Really no serious discussion or consideration of moral or other reasons not to do it, contrary to Stimson's (McGeorge Bundy's) claims.

Bundy really bears quite heavy responsibility for legitimating the action/precedent, strongly deceptively and with enormous effect, that may end most human life on earth. (He is the Johnny Cochran of the arms race; but even worse, because Cochran just got OJ off, he didn't legitimate celebrity murder by claiming it was necessary and justified, that no crime had been committed). He used a classic necessity defense, argued it in public (with the advantage of very effective and prolonged secrecy--governmental conspiracy--that made his false and incomplete assertions plausible) and persuaded the American public that the largest publicly known single act of terrorism in history had been justified. Thus, that no absolute ban on such methods and weapons was appropriate for the future, when they might be needed again, at the discretion of the President. (Secrecy had supposedly been required, leaving the decision to Presidential decision, not to Congress or public debate. Yet this was a spurious argument. Secrecy from Germany was highly important, but this reason ended on May 8 (?) when Germany surrendered. There was no plausible reason for secrecy after that, against Japan. In fact, most officials urged a threat/warning/ultimatum, with more or less revelation of the nature of the weapon. The argument for maximum surprise and "shock" was implausible and held by very few people. The secrecy served mainly or entirely to avert public debate, and to prolong the war till the bomb could be used, i.e., to avert a Japanese surrender before it had been demonstrated.

(Was a demonstration of our willingness to use it on a city, and its effects, actually necessary for major effect in using the weapon diplomatically against the Russians? Would not a description of it, or at most the demonstration at Trinity, with Russian observers, have done most of the work of intimidation and bargaining, if the bomb were going to have any useful effect at all? I.e., even for Gar's reasons, it's far from clear that actual atomic attacks were necessary.

However, for intimidation the demonstration on a city might be thought to be more impressive. But at the cost, which Szilard warned, of making a bad Soviet reaction, a crash effort to acquire the bomb, much more likely. And this was a far more likely effect, though Truman and Byrnes don't seem to have weighed it very heavily or at all, perhaps because they really thought it impossible that the Soviets could manufacture the bomb.)

In general, why shouldn't police use terrorism, torture, take hostages, kidnap, use weapons of mass destruction? After all, they are granted a "monopoly of violence" or of legitimate violence (including capital punishment).

Because such methods, especially if used routinely by authorities, would endanger citizens, reduce "order," and particularly, subvert norms that the state is trying to strengthen, in the effort to reduce and manage threatening forms of violence. The state, in its monopoly of internal violence, is not permitted to use any/unlimited/unrestricted scale or type of violence, even against violent enemies.

Churchill, and then FDR and HST, did do what Beckett (or was it More?) warned against doing in England: tear down every fence and law in England to beat the Devil. ("And what would protect you against the devil, then?" Get the exact quote and reference). To beat the devil--which was more evenly matched against the state than any internal opponent--he renounced any restriction on the use of violence. Just as CIA has in the covert war, covertly. (Hence, either small-scale or through proxies).

"If guns were outlawed, only outlaws would have guns." (The same argument is used against the abolition of nuclear weapons). But this leaves out the police, in the case of handguns! We don't really rely on armed citizens to deter and manage armed crime!

We have never needed to deter nuclear attack by threat of nuclear retaliation against any enemy but the Soviet Union. We have no such need today. The SU was the only potential enemy since 1945 that we could not defeat without using nuclear weapons (or with them, if use was mutual). Any other potential opponent who used nuclear weapons against us or an ally could be punished by military defeat and occupation, without using nuclear weapons (and

without retaliation against population). (That was true of Nazi Germany, as well: unless the Nazis had acquired a large arsenal of nuclear weapons, ten or more). (China?)

So if we collaborate with Russia, and with other industrial states, there is no need to rely on or legitimate nuclear deterrence.